

# Hypermasculinity and Incarceration: Exploring Barriers to Rehabilitation

by

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## ABSTRACT

Corrections has a rich history centered around rehabilitation and its obtainability, and has seen the pendulum swing back and forth between rehabilitative and punitive policies. Currently, there is an emphasis on evidence-based practices which provides a unique opportunity to assess gaps in the rehabilitation literature as a means to ensure that rehabilitative-oriented policies are part of the forefront of corrections. One notable gap in the corrections and rehabilitation literature is that research has not assessed what influences meaningful participation in rehabilitative programming during incarceration. Past research has acknowledged that there is an inmate code, characterized heavily by hypermasculinity, that negatively influences behavior during incarceration, yet research has not examined whether this code influences engagement in rehabilitative programming. The current study seeks to address this gap by examining the inmate code, specifically hypermasculinity, as a barrier to rehabilitation during incarceration through in-depth interviews with five incarcerated individuals from a large Southwestern correctional facility. Findings, limitations, and future research suggestions are discussed.

## DEDICATION

For my father. Each word was written with you in mind. I love and miss you dearly.

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Rehabilitation is the elusive ideal of corrections. While the name implies a belief that criminal and deviant behavior can be changed or “corrected,” the field has a rich history debating rehabilitation’s place in corrections and whether or not it is an achievable outcome. From the Progressive Era characterized by individualized treatment (Rothman, 1971) to the age of “nothing works” (Martinson, 1974) marked by mass incarceration and punishment-oriented philosophies, we have seen the correctional pendulum swing back and forth between rehabilitative and punitive policies. In recent years there has yet again been a movement towards evidence-based practices in corrections (Listwan, Jonson, Cullen, & Latessa, 2008; MacKenzie, 2006)—with the evidence speaking to whether programs or policies can contribute to behavior change and a corresponding reduction in criminal behavior. Rehabilitation is again at the forefront of corrections.

But we’ve been here before. There is good reason to believe that the pendulum will swing once again and rehabilitative policies will take a back seat to punishment-oriented practices. Anticipating this shift provides an opportunity to ask what can be done differently to make rehabilitation a more permanent part of the corrections landscape. Criminologists and correctional scholars have long sought to understand the appeal of a corrections that is grounded in rehabilitation. Previous research has investigated the influence of *public support for rehabilitation* (Cullen, Fisher, & Applegate, 2000; Nagin, Piquero, Scott, & Steinberg, 2006), *public attitudes toward offenders* (Rade, Desmarais, & Mitchell, 2016; Wakefield & Uggen, 2010), *costs associated with rehabilitative programming* (Aos, Miller, & Drake, 2006; Aos, Phipps, Barnoski, & Lieb, 2001), and *the influence of political ideologies* (Cullen, 2012; Cullen & Gilbert, 2013). Additionally, previous research has sought to understand what makes rehabilitative programming and

interventions effective during incarceration (Andrews, Zinger, Hoge, Bonta, Gendreau, & Cullen, 1990; Lipsey & Cullen, 2007; Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Smith, 2006; Wilson, Gallagher, & MacKenzie, 2000) and has taken stock of rehabilitation across the history of corrections (Cullen, 2005; Cullen, 2013; Cullen & Gendreau, 2001).

This body of work has provided an important foundation for understanding why rehabilitation comes and goes. Largely left out of this line of work, however, is an important voice: those individuals we are trying to rehabilitate. Specifically, the time has not been taken to directly ask those who are incarcerated what works in terms of programming and rehabilitation during incarceration. These are the people that are expected to buy-in to programs and rehabilitation efforts during incarceration and the people who are most directly impacted when these resources disappear in favor of more punitive approaches; yet, they are often not asked what makes them want to engage—or not engage—in programming in the first place. This is a problem, and it leaves room to question whether there are barriers during incarceration that prevent incarcerated individuals from “opting in.” Achieving rehabilitation during incarceration might not be as simple as having more rehabilitative programs available in prison or public support for these resources. If those who are incarcerated do not engage in programs or care about programs, having *more* programs does not matter, nor does the opinion of the public.

The expression “they have to want to change” is uttered frequently. This typically implies some desire for cognitive transformation on the part of an incarcerated individual after he or she tires of a criminal lifestyle. But what if this desire to change is impeded by a larger culture that is resistant to receiving assistance? It has been widely acknowledged that there is an inmate code, largely rooted in hypermasculine attitudes, that dictates

behavior during incarceration (Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Sykes & Messinger, 1960). Given the established influence of the inmate code on behavior during incarceration, there is reason to believe that the hypermasculine attitudes that largely comprise the inmate code play some role in the willingness to participate or engage in programming. In short, the demand side for rehabilitation may not be as clear-cut as we would like to think, and tinkering solely with the supply side may ignore a critical component to achieving a correctional system that is firmly grounded in rehabilitative policies.

The current study seeks to understand the barriers that may, or may not, exist to engagement in programming and the rehabilitative process during incarceration, with an emphasis on the influence of hypermasculine attitudes and the inmate code. More broadly, the current study seeks to acknowledge the importance of incarcerated individuals' perspectives and experiences as clients of the correctional system who are expected to "buy in" to rehabilitation and programming during incarceration. In doing so, this work identifies the presence and influence of the inmate code and hypermasculine attitudes on engagement in programming during incarceration, while also asking those who are incarcerated what they believe influences engagement in programming and engagement with the rehabilitative process more generally during incarceration.

### **BARRIERS TO PROGRAMMING**

Borrowing from Stohr, Jonson, and Cullen's (2013) lessons learned and suggestions for the future of American corrections, this study embraces the notion that "prisons must improve, not harm inmates" (p.259). In keeping with this, a truly rehabilitative prison would be therapeutic in nature. The idea of a therapeutic prison is hardly novel (Genders & Player, 1995; Genders & Player, 2010; Smith & Schweitzer,



2012), although its development and application within the correctional setting is still relatively new. Smith and Schweitzer (2012) suggest that the therapeutic prison is grounded in evidence-based practices, utilizes a risk-needs approach to treatment, and employs programs that address criminogenic needs.

To no surprise, the therapeutic prison is also one that utilizes therapy as a treatment for incarcerated individuals. However, previous work has highlighted some of the obstacles that exist to successful therapeutic relationships during incarceration – some of which are related to the inmate code and hypermasculine attitudes. For example, while minimizing displays of vulnerability are encouraged by the inmate code and hypermasculine culture, displays of vulnerability and openness are needed to develop therapeutic relationships and to ultimately find success in therapy (Kupers, 2005). The perceived and actual pressure to conform to hypermasculine expectations simultaneously reduces willingness and ability to be openly expressive, emotionally communicative, and to develop relationships grounded in trust (De Viggiani, 2012). Spencer and colleagues (2004) assert that trust is a critical part of developing resilience, and trust cannot be developed if hypermasculine coping mechanisms are allowed to reign free without being countered by adaptive, prosocial coping strategies.

## **INMATE CODE & INCARCERATION**

In general, research has supported the notion that prison can be a violent environment in which victimization is prevalent (Blitz et al., 2008; Lahm, 2009; Steiner et al., 2015; Teasdale et al., 2015; Wolff et al., 2007; Wolff et al., 2009; Wolff & Shi, 2009). In addition, research has shown that during incarceration, narratives are constructed about how one should behave—many of which are structured around dominant displays of

masculinity (Evans & Wallace, 2007). These expectations of behavior during incarceration have become recognized as the inmate code. Broadly, the inmate code requires disciplining or punishing any acts of perceived disrespect, using aggression and violence as a resolution for conflict, and establishing and maintaining a tough status (Michalski, 2015). These broad expectations manifest into specific behaviors that are displayed commonly by those who are incarcerated, some of which include: acting tough or hard, being ready to fight or use violence at any time, not showing fear, not acting in a way that implies femininity or homosexuality, not trusting anyone, and not helping authority figures (Sabo, Kupers, and London, 2001). These expectations of behavior are unofficial, yet well understood and often enforced harshly by other inmates (Haney, 2011).

Respect is highly prized by the inmate code and is closely associated with violence. Kupers (2005) finds that one way to gain respect within the prison environment is to display physical domination that is violent in nature. In general, the inmate code associates confrontation, physicality, aggression, domination, and heterosexuality with respect and credibility (Seymour, 2003). In addition to respect, status can be gained or lost based off of offense type. Crimes that involve weaker or more vulnerable victims accrue the least amount of status, whereas crimes that insinuate toughness or rebellion are more likely to elevate status within the prison culture (Karp, 2010). This is perhaps most evident for those incarcerated for sexual offenses, who are ostracized from the larger incarcerated population. As much as the inmate code is about displaying toughness, it is equally concerned with concealing weakness. Displays of weakness are not welcomed by the inmate code and are considered to be a source of vulnerability that provoke exploitation

from other inmates (Seymour, 2003). Showing kindness, gentleness, care, sadness, and love are all considered indicators of weakness within the inmate code (Carceral, 2004).

## **HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY & HYPERMASCULINITY**

Many of the attitudes and behaviors associated with the inmate code are reflective of hegemonic masculinity and hypermasculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is considered to be the presiding notion of masculinity, or what it means to be a man in a given social context (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Karp, 2010). Hegemonic masculinity is fluid and can change as social contexts change; however, there are certain characteristics of hegemonic masculinity that have remained rather consistent across time. Central features of the hegemonic masculine ideal include highly valuing power, control, competition, and emotional suppression (Evans & Wallace, 2007). Additionally, hegemonic masculinity values authority, heterosexuality, independence, aggressiveness, and a tolerance of violence (Connell, 2014; Karp, 2010). Hegemonic masculinity also emphasizes the importance of material wealth and respect, and the use of intimidation to display manliness (Connell, 2002).

There are aspects of hegemonic masculinity that are considered to be maladaptive and destructive, while other aspects of hegemonic masculinity are entirely valued and accepted (Kupers, 2005), illustrating that there are both positive and negative ways to pursue the masculine ideal. For example, wanting to be respected, autonomous, independent, and a provider are not inherently problematic from a psychological or criminological standpoint; in fact, they are relatively prosocial, but the way that those ideals are pursued is what can be cause for concern. The pursuit of hegemonic masculinity is often associated with homophobia, misogyny, and a high tolerance for the use of violence

(Carlson, 2013; Kupers, 2005; Parrot & Zeichner, 2003). Perhaps one of the most notable negative pursuits of the masculine ideal is criminal behavior. Masculinity has been explored and evaluated in relation to crime with Messerschmidt (1993) arguing that crime more broadly is the result of “doing masculinity” in which males attempt to establish their masculine identities by using the most readily available resources to do so. For example, he argues that middle-class, white men are more easily able to establish masculine identities and provide for themselves through educational attainment and good careers, whereas lower-class, minority men have less legitimate opportunities and are more likely to use crime and violence to establish masculinity. Aside from crime in a more general sense, more specific criminal behavior, such as sexual violence, has been linked to overcoming masculinity challenges (Messerschmidt, 2000).

Hypermasculinity has been defined as an aggressive or exaggerated form of masculinity that is used to achieve a respected male identity, or hegemonic masculinity (Haney, 2011; Seymour, 2003). Defining features of hypermasculinity are largely centered on displays of toughness, violence, and respect, and the concealment of weakness and vulnerability—the same values held by the inmate code. Kupers (2005) notes that characteristics of hypermasculinity include displaying a tough attitude, angry outbursts, shortsightedness, impulsivity, and a persistent need to be respected that is obtained or maintained through violence. Other works associate hypermasculinity with callousness towards women (Mosher and Sirkin, 1984) and the use of physical aggression to mask the display of emotions (Haney, 2011). Very similar to the inmate code, hypermasculinity is just as much about behaviors that are hidden as it is about behaviors that are displayed. While displays of power, aggression, and violence are valued and enhance the

hypermasculine identity, displays of weakness can quickly undermine that ideal, making the concealment of vulnerability and weakness an integral part of hypermasculinity (Karp, 2010; Spence, Fegley, Hapalani, & Seaton, 2004). While hypermasculinity is used as a tool to achieve a desired male identity, it is not considered normative behavior. Rather, hypermasculinity has been shown to serve as a coping mechanism and can be used across multiple contexts to achieve different goals (Spencer et al., 2004). For example, the use of hypermasculinity can be used to garner status in accordance with the inmate code within the prison setting (Seymour, 2003) or can be used as a fear response or coping mechanism (Spencer et al., 2004).

## **HYPERMASCULINITY & INCARCERATION**

Prison is widely recognized and understood to contain a hypermasculine culture (Haney, 2011; Toch, 1998). In fact, hypermasculinity has been referred to as an institutional norm within the prison setting (Karp, 2010). Michalski (2015) reasons that this occurs because there are very few ways for those who are incarcerated to establish masculine hierarchies given that they all share the same living arrangements and share in the same lack of autonomy, independence, and freedom. Masculinity resources are scarce in prison and those who are incarcerated seek to establish their male identities with the available resources which “intensifies the hegemonic expression of gender into a form of hypermasculinity” (Karp, 2010, p.66). Consequently, hierarchies within the prison environment are established off of hypermasculine ideals, such as the ability to mask vulnerability and demonstrate physical dominance over other males, using the masculine resources that are available for them to do so: physical aggression and violence (Karp,

2010). In this sense, hypermasculinity becomes a resource to establish status and power in a homogenous environment.

Hypermasculinity appears to be even more exaggerated within the prison environment compared to the outside. The use of violence is the ultimate display of hypermasculinity in prison and takes form in fights with other inmates, assaults on correctional officers, and sexual assault (Kupers, 2005; Michalski, 2015). Similar to expressions of hypermasculinity outside of prison, displays of hypermasculinity in prison involve emotional withdrawal, emotional isolation, and asserting a reputation grounded in respect (De Viggiani, 2012; Seymour, 2003).

However, expressions of hypermasculinity in prison differ from displays of hypermasculinity outside of prison in meaningful ways. The emotional environment of prisons has been recognized as being characterized by anger and fear, while displays of empathy, vulnerability, and caring are scarce and most often unwelcome (Haney, 2011). Displays of emotion, prison culture norms, and masculinity vary across different spaces within the prison environment (Crewe, Warr, Bennett, & Smith, 2013). Displays and expressions of masculinity in prison occur within a context characterized by risk, uncertainty, fear of victimization, and vulnerability (Ricciardelli, Maier, Hannah-Moffat, 2015). In this sense, hypermasculinity serves as a coping mechanism in response to environmental stressors, relieves short-term needs and fears, and allows those who are incarcerated to adapt to the prison environment (Spencer, Fegley, Hapalani, & Seaton, 2004). However, even with this in mind, Toch (1998) maintains that hypermasculinity is detrimental for the inmates even though it services needs in the short-term.

Many of those incarcerated perceive that it is necessary to project a hypermasculine front to the larger prison population and hypermasculine displays are most often done publicly to show conformity within the dominant prison culture (De Viggiani, 2012). Although, not all men who are incarcerated subscribe to hypermasculine pursuits of hegemonic masculinity. Within the prison context, men who may not necessarily endorse hypermasculinity, still identify with masculine expectations or norms, such as seeing men as providers (Evans & Wallace, 2007). Additionally, even though not all men in prison endorse hypermasculine norms or behaviors and are comfortable with displaying emotions, they are still cautious about how they display or express emotions in front of others, and typically keep their views private (Evans & Wallace, 2007). De Viggiani (2012) finds that in private or with trusted others, sometimes the hypermasculine front is dropped or reduced. More often though, incarcerated individuals will keep non-hypermasculine views and behaviors private since those who challenge hypermasculine attitudes and seek alternative masculinity attitudes run the risk of being vulnerable within the prison setting (Seymour, 2003).

Previous research assessing the influence of hypermasculinity on behavior, both in and outside of prison, illustrates that while it is adaptive in some situations to service short-term needs, it is mostly maladaptive overall (Beesley & McGuire, 2009; Carlsson, 2013). For example, Seymour (2003) finds that hypermasculine approaches to conflict come at the expense of prosocial problem-solving strategies. Kupers (2001; 2005) argues that the expectations of the inmate code create an added level of difficulty to conducting therapy in prison. Specifically it is argued that the emotional suppression that is demanded by the inmate code makes it markedly more difficult to reach incarcerated individuals

therapeutically. Kupers (2005) goes as far to argue that hypermasculinity is a barrier to mental health treatment during incarceration and likely contributes to resistance to psychotherapy during incarceration. This makes sense given the same characteristics that are prized by the inmate code and are hypermasculine are also ones that work against establishing therapeutic relationships.

Some research suggests that hypermasculinity serves as an obstacle to rehabilitation and should be addressed during incarceration. Seymour (2003) writes, “That we expect prisoners to be rehabilitated in an environment that actively endorses the attitudes and beliefs associated with the sexualization, objectification and exploitation of women is a critical concern” (p.51). Evans and Wallace (2010) suggest that challenging masculine beliefs as a part of prison rehabilitation could greatly benefit both individual and emotional well-being for men, while Spencer and colleagues (2004) posit that better understanding of the complexities of hypermasculinity is central to designing interventions that promote resilience. Furthermore, Lutze and Murphy’s (2005) evaluation of boot camp prisons finds that even though boot camp prisons are treatment-focused and oriented towards rehabilitation, they reinforce hypermasculine behaviors and hegemonic masculinity stereotypes that ultimately counter the benefits to completing the program. All of which goes to illustrate that even when rehabilitation is at the forefront of programming, an inability to recognize the influence of masculinity dynamics and address them can undermine rehabilitative efforts.

Additionally, many of those who are incarcerated are still developing their male identities, making the information they receive from the prison about masculinity that much more influential (Haney, 2011). Masculinity concepts and definitions are fluid, and



previous research shows that men are open to exploring alternative masculine identities and challenging the ones they currently have, but that achieving this in the correctional environment most likely requires additional patience, understanding, and time (Evans & Wallace, 2007). Curtis (2014) adds that the prison serves as an environment that can construct, reconstruct, affirm, or reaffirm ideas surrounding what it means to be a man and how behaviors and attitudes should reflect that definition. Taken altogether, the inmate code—influenced significantly by ideals of hypermasculinity—may contribute to an environment in which rehabilitation is neither welcomed nor feasible.

### **CURRENT FOCUS**

There is a renewed interest in corrections that is based on rehabilitation and evidence-based practices, yet there is a large body of literature that suggests hypermasculinity actively subverts the goals of corrections during incarceration. Accordingly, the current study seeks to understand what influences engagement in the rehabilitative process – or prevents it altogether – during incarceration, with a particular emphasis on the influence of the inmate code and hypermasculinity and the perspectives of incarcerated individuals. In doing so, the study asks, are there barriers to achieving rehabilitation during incarceration? If there are barriers to rehabilitation, is hypermasculinity, as seen through the inmate code, one of them? The current study has three objectives in answering these questions. First, the study identifies the prevalence and influence of the inmate code and hypermasculine attitudes on engagement in rehabilitative programming during incarceration. Second, the study asks those who are incarcerated what they believe influences engagement in programming during incarceration. Third, the study asks those who are incarcerated what they believe rehabilitation means and what influences

engagement in the rehabilitative process during incarceration. In addressing these objectives, the influence of hypermasculinity on rehabilitation during incarceration is identified among a sample (n=5) of incarcerated men. The broader purpose of the current work is to establish the importance of considering the “client’s perspective” of a correctional system guided by rehabilitation.

## **DATA AND METHODS**

### **STUDY SETTING**

The current study contains a sample of five incarcerated men from the Arizona Department of Corrections (ADC). ADC houses around 42,000 incarcerated individuals and contains an ethnically and racially diverse population, with roughly 40% of incarcerated individuals identifying as Hispanic, 39% identifying as Caucasian, 14% identifying as African-American, and 5% as identifying as Native American (Arizona Department of Corrections, 2017). Incarcerated individuals are housed across 10 different facilities, varying in custody level, in addition to 6 private prison facilities across the state. At the time of data collection, ADC reported 36,262 total program enrollments (not accounting for incarcerated individuals enrolled in more than one program simultaneously), across a variety of program types: education (5,538 enrollments), addiction treatment (807 enrollments), sex offender treatment (263 enrollments), self-improvement programs (4,568 enrollments), and work programs (25,086 enrollments) (Arizona Department of Corrections, 2017). The sample of incarcerated men in this study were all housed within the East Unit of the Arizona State Prison Complex in Florence,

Arizona, which housed 671 incarcerated individuals at the time of data collection. It should be noted that this unit is considered unique within the correctional facility.<sup>1</sup>

## **DATA**

**Sample.** With the intention of understanding barriers to rehabilitation and programming during incarceration, through an emphasis on hypermasculinity and the inmate code, the purposive sample (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006) is made up of five incarcerated individuals who had recently participated, or were actively participating, in programming during incarceration. The participants were recruited from the first Inside-Out Prison Exchange course in Arizona in the spring of 2016. The participants were selected for Inside-Out after a rigorous process that ensured they had been free of any recent disciplinary infractions and were appropriate for the course as determined by ADC officials and the Inside-Out course instructors. Subsequently, the five individuals in this study were identified as exceptional participants within the Inside-Out course and chosen to be a part an Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program think tank referred to as the Arizona Transformation Project (ATP). Within the ATP, the sample of incarcerated individuals for this study work to create learning opportunities oriented towards community and correctional awareness.

The sample was mainly middle-aged, with ages ranging from 36 to 49 years old. Of the five participants, none were married, although one described being in a committed relationship, and three of the five participants had children. Educational attainment ranged from GED/high school to Masters. Four of the five participants indicated that this was their

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<sup>1</sup> The unit is a medium security yard that has a particular emphasis on programming, so much so that it is informally referred to as a “programming yard.” There is an expectation among both those who are incarcerated and correctional staff that there is active participation in programming and minimal disciplinary problems.

first time serving an adult sentence, and the number of years spent incarcerated on their current sentences ranges from 4 years to 22 years. Lastly, all of the participants had been involved in at least one program during incarceration.

**Key Variables.** The variables of interest for this study were hypermasculinity (as seen through the inmate code), attitudes towards and perceptions of programming during incarceration, and attitudes towards and perceptions of rehabilitation. Each of these variables were conceptualized based off of first and second-cycle coding analysis (Saldana, 2009) of the participants' responses to interview questions and prompts. The study aimed to understand what hypermasculinity, rehabilitation, and programming during incarceration mean to those who are incarcerated. As such the interview protocol (see Appendix A), was broken down into five sections to address the aforementioned variables of interest.

***Incarceration.*** The first section of the interview protocol asked participants about their incarceration experiences more broadly: *"How long have you been in prison?" "Can you tell me what it has been like to be in prison?"* while eventually tapping into experiences with expectations of behavior during incarceration: *"Are there any ways that you behave or act differently in prison versus outside of prison?"* The purpose in asking these questions was to gain a better understanding of participants' experiences during incarceration, and to also establish the presence of the inmate code and attitudes towards the inmate code.

***Hypermasculinity and Incarceration.*** The second section of the interview protocol addressed masculinity attitudes during incarceration. First, this section asked participants about their beliefs and attitudes surrounding masculinity more generally: *"Can you tell me about what you think it means to be a man or to be masculine?"* Second, this section asked

participants about their attitudes towards masculinity as it relates to incarceration: *“How, if at all, has incarceration influenced the way you think about what it means to be a man or to be masculine?”* The goal in asking these questions was to establish masculinity attitudes, particularly hypermasculine attitudes, and how those attitudes are influenced by incarceration.

***Programming and Incarceration.*** The third section of the interview protocol addressed programming during incarceration. First, this section asked participants about their experiences with programming: *“What has influenced your participation in programming in prison?”* Second, this section asked participants about their attitudes towards programming during incarceration: *“How do you feel about programming in prison?”* Lastly, this section asked participants about their perceptions of other incarcerated individuals’ experiences with programming and attitudes towards programming during incarceration: *“How do you think your experiences with programming compare to other inmates?”* The goal in asking these questions was to establish the perceived determinants of participation in programming during incarceration by examining previous experience with programming, attitudes towards programming and perceptions of other incarcerated individuals’ experiences with and attitudes towards programming.

***Rehabilitation.*** The fourth section of the interview protocol addressed rehabilitation during incarceration. First, this section asked participants to define rehabilitation and described their experiences, if any, with rehabilitation: *“Can you tell me about what rehabilitation means to you?”* Second, this section asked participants how, if at all, rehabilitation is related programming during incarceration: *“Have you found your*

*experiences with programming to be rehabilitative?”* Third, this section asked participants about their perceptions of other incarcerated individuals’ attitudes towards rehabilitation: *“How do you think your experiences with rehabilitation compare to other inmates’ experiences?”* The purpose in asking these questions was to establish rehabilitation attitudes during incarceration and explore how they relate to programming during incarceration.

***Hypermasculinity, Programming and Rehabilitation.*** The fifth and last section of the interview protocol asked participants about the relationship between hypermasculinity, programming, and rehabilitation during incarceration. First, this section asked participants about the influence of the inmate code on willingness to program: *“How, if at all, have others’ expectations about how one should act in prison influenced your willingness to participate in programming?”* Second, this section asked participants how masculinity attitudes influence willingness to program: *“How, if at all, have your own expectations about how you should act as a man in prison influenced your participation in programming?”* Third, this section asked participants about the relationship between masculinity attitudes, the inmate code and rehabilitation during incarceration: *“How, if at all, do you think expectations about how one should act in prison influence rehabilitation in prison?”* The goal in asking these questions was to tie in the previous sections of the interview tool to establish whether or not the variables of interest were related.

## **ANALYTIC STRATEGY**

Data for the current study were obtained through loosely-structured, in-depth interviews comprised of open-ended questions. This approach was chosen for two reasons. First, given the lack of research and knowledge about barriers to rehabilitation during

incarceration, the study is exploratory in nature and is largely reliant on the experiences and perceptions of those incarcerated to inform the research questions (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006). Second, the use of in-depth interviews allows for the meanings those who are incarcerated assign to rehabilitation, hypermasculinity, and programming during incarceration to be brought to light and allows us to see the rehabilitative process through their eyes (Lofland et al., 2006).

Interviews were conducted individually and each lasted approximately two hours, giving roughly ten hours of interview data for the analysis. Although the sample was limited by its small size, the study attempted to counter this with in-depth interviews that elicited deep and meaningful descriptions. To allow for free expression, the interviews were conducted privately with one interviewer and one participant in a programming office and audio-recorded. Given the sensitive nature of the questions, it was important to have the interviews conducted away from other incarcerated individuals and correctional staff to allow for free expression of perceptions, attitudes, and experiences, and to maintain the privacy of the participants. The interviews were semi-structured, with the interview tool outlining basic demographic information, masculinity attitudes and experiences, experiences with and attitudes towards programming and incarceration, and attitudes towards and perceptions of rehabilitation. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed to maintain the original statements of the participants. Additionally, pseudonyms were provided for respondents to protect their identity and preserve their confidentiality.

Analysis of the interviews was conducted using first cycle values coding and second cycle patterned and focused coding (Saldana, 2009). While the interview tool

provided some structure and assumptions for analysis based on masculinity, programming and rehabilitation, open coding was used to uncover emerging themes from the interviews (Cresswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). Emergent themes and concepts were largely produced from the data itself and the analysis sought to identify, sort, and classify the concepts identified by the participants as most significant and influential into meaningful groups.

## **RESULTS**

### **THE INMATE CODE, HYPERMASCULINITY, AND PROGRAMMING**

The first aims of the study were to 1) identify the prevalence of the inmate code and hypermasculine attitudes in the prison setting and 2) to investigate the influence of the inmate code and hypermasculine attitudes on willingness to engage in rehabilitative programming during incarceration. In doing so, several key themes were identified: presence of the inmate code, experience with the inmate code, origination of the inmate code, masculinity attitudes, perceptions of masculinity during incarceration, shifts in masculinity attitudes, navigating the inmate code and hypermasculinity, and prison yard environment. Each theme is discussed below.

**Presence of the Inmate Code.** All of the participants acknowledged that there were expectations of their behavior based off of being incarcerated—referred to as the “inmate code,” “convict code,” and “politics.” Consistent with previous research, these expectations of behavior ranged from not interacting outside of one’s race, to maintaining an image of respect, to managing perceptions of weakness. The consequences of not following these guidelines of behavior were almost exclusively violence.

**ADAM:** If it’s not business then the two don’t cross lines or the three don’t cross lines at all... a guy can’t smoke after another race... All of that warrants discipline,



and when I say discipline, I mean violence. It doesn't mean uh, uh, "Hey man, don't do that." Nah, they'll knock your teeth out for that automatically.

**LAWRENCE:** If somebody disrespects you, you're supposed to handle it... You have the, the three words that you're not supposed to let anybody call you. You don't let nobody call you a punk, you don't let nobody call you the b-word, you don't let anybody call you a snitch... Those are supposed to be fightin' words in the penitentiary and no matter what, you're supposed to fight. Or if someone calls you out to fight, you have to go fight 'em, that's, that's the thing.

**MARTIN:** Let 'em know that you're serious and, and if they see that you're weak or that you can be exploited, they love that 'cause that's what the system is about is, you know, with the politics on the other yard, is they look for the weak minded and exploit them to do their dirty work.

**Experience with the Inmate Code.** While it was widely acknowledged that the inmate code existed strongly within this institutional setting, the participants varied in their experiences with the inmate code. Martin, for example, described being unaware what the rules of the prison were and witnessing violence. Whereas, Adam explained the expectation placed on him to be involved with violent situations, and Jeremy recalled using violence to bolster his reputation and address a perceived attack on his name.

**MARTIN:** Boy it's a quick transition - you learn very quick. My very first day in...I'm askin' someone who has a bunch of ink and everything, I'm like, "Well, can you give me a little bit of heads-up? And he's like, "Just mind your own business. Don't pay attention to anything." So as I'm walkin', walkin' into the cell comin' from rec and on the first yard, right away I can hear somebody's gettin',

you know, smashed or beat up, several people beatin' this guy, but I'm just mindin' my own business. But when you hear it and, you know, see it, it's like, your stomach sinks like, "Oh my gosh, this is the reality," you know? You're in prison and now it's like what's, what's gonna happen next?

**ADAM:** I was expected to be frontline, I was expected to be involved whether it's to help or harm the situation.

**JEREMY:** So when someone tries to sully your name, you have to defend that and defend it extremely, right? So what I did was, you know, there were three guys, you know, tellin' me that this is what they heard about me, I fractured one's jaw with a lock, you know, and took the lock on the other two guys and beat them down, and then uh, when it was over with, you know uh, I went and beat them down again, you know, for the whole yard to see... the good thing that came from it was people fear me and people respect me, you know? And because of that, I don't have to fight anybody, I just get serious and get the serious face, and look you dead in the eye and, "Look here, buddy," you know, "Ah, shit. This is the guy we heard about."

**Origination of the Inmate Code.** A noticeable theme throughout the interviews was the beliefs surrounding why the inmate code exists and why the prison culture is violent. Many of the views were reflective of the importation and deprivation models of the conditions of confinement (Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Sykes, 1958), acknowledging that many of those who were incarcerated brought in violent attitudes and behaviors in with them from outside of prison, but that the prison environment heightened those attitudes and behaviors.

**ADAM:** So irregardless to how a person was raised or what they believe in, this place will make a person think, especially if you're a young man and you're doin' a lot of time, before, by the time you come out of this place, you'll think like this is normal and all of that that you were accustomed to growin' up was junk. All of what you experienced in high school and college, and havin' a variety of people around, you'll, this will become the new norm, you see what I mean? It's a brainwash.

**SEAN:** But uh, so you just, you live your life like that and then you come in here, then you try to gain respect here by doing the same kind of behavior, so prisons can add to it though because instead of tryin' to build a person's self-respect up and self-dignity up, the environment itself can tear down a person's dignity and if they're not strong willed, it could easily destroy it and it just takes 'em deeper down.

**JEREMY:** It's exponentially worse in here. You know, so when you have a bunch of guys acting like they're tough then you have stupid things, like if a guy calls you a punk, you know, you have to fight. And if you don't fight then people from your hood or your race will send three guys to beat you up because you didn't fight this guy for callin' you a name. And it doesn't happen like that on the streets, you know, even though we grew up with the same mentality in the neighborhoods, if someone calls you a punk, you know, out there, you can walk away or you can just laugh it off, "Ahh, whatever," you know? Uh, uh, but you put these fences around and all of a sudden the dynamic changes.

Jeremy goes further to say that he believes the violence and emotional deprivation he has experienced as a part of his incarceration would influence his reentry.

**JEREMY:** I was tellin' my mom, I said, "Listen. You know, if for some ...I was sent out there, I couldn't be, I know that I can't be just, just go out there and act like all of this stuff didn't happen. It happened. It's there," you know? And, and so when you send people to prison and you send 'em in here with....(sigh) with all the violence, you don't know what's gonna come out, you know? Not only that, the, you know, just bein' deprived of basic human emotion, you know, it does something to you, you know? And uh, and there are unforeseen consequences to all of this that need to be discovered.

**Masculinity Attitudes.** Although the participants described the ways in which they engaged in the inmate code, and displayed hypermasculine behaviors—specifically, using violence in the pursuit of respect and heightened social status—their current definitions of masculinity did not reflect hypermasculine attitudes. Although some identified hegemonic masculine ideals in their definitions (such as being seen as strong and being a provider), the majority felt that being a man meant to be loving, selfless, independent, a role model for their loved ones, and not having to conform to others' expectations of what it means to be a man or masculine. Perhaps most interesting was that most of the men felt that their definitions of masculinity differed from the majority of incarcerated individuals.

**ADAM:** Uh, incarceration makes it hard uh, but what I think it means to be a man is to, is to just have compassion, love uh, consider others around you uh, sometimes even over yourself, without harming yourself though.

**SEAN:** I think it's the complete opposite of what most people think. I think it's when I need to do what somebody else tells me to do just so I can get their approval or to, you know, feel like I'm a tough guy or uh, have to fit in with the crowd. That's weakness, you know? ...When you can't stand up for... who you are, and have your own morals and integrity, and stand behind 'em no matter what kind...[of] ridicule you know you're gonna get, or someone call you weak, or someone may view you as, you know, a coward or whatever.

**MARTIN:** What I believe is different from in here, I think, you know, bein' a man is, number one, you know, bein' able to uh, be a trusted, be a good role model for, you know, whether it's your family, your kids, your nieces, your nephews, be trusted, have integrity...not be judgmental on...other people's thoughts or, or their feelings.

**JEREMY:** Growin' up, you start to see, "Look man, you don't have to be a tough guy to be a man." That men can actually show their emotions, you know, and I think that a man is just bein' responsible... a man is, is not having to be who other people are, other, or expect you to be. Being yourself, you know? I do believe that a man should be, should be strong, a man should be the, the leader of a household, you know, and, but I don't believe that a man should be dominant.

**Perceptions of Masculinity During Incarceration.** However, the participants felt that other incarcerated individuals viewed masculinity and manhood differently from them. Particularly, it was noted that they believed most other men thought of masculinity as being tough, willing to use violence, trying to impress other men, and disrespecting women.

**ADAM:** I think uh, bein' a man means to those people what everybody else think. Like, like how do I impress this cat? You spend your whole life uh, tryin' to be like validated or accepted, tryin' to prove yourself.

**SEAN:** Most guys in here... they think a man is a guy that...maybe never lost a fight in his life or... that can do 100 pull ups and 50 push ups in two minutes or something and...got a bunch of girls visiting.

**MARTIN:** In here the man is, you know, bein' the tough guy, ready to fight at any limits, lookin' for trouble, gettin' tattoos, usin' vulgar language, not carin', you know, for many, it's okay to hit a, a female ...fights, and thinks that's cool, and doin' drugs. Uh, you know, havin' a lot of kids and not supportin' 'em.

**JEREMY:** Most of these guys, they don't, they don't know. They just think bein' a man is bein' a tough guy, you know, and, and denigrating women.

**LAWRENCE:** Because I'm a man, I'm supposed to not care about the sanctity of marriage, I'm not supposed to respect this woman, I'm just supposed to be actin' purely off of carnal instinct and just look at this woman as somethin' to be used and abused.

**Shifts in Masculinity Attitudes.** Even though the majority of the men described their definitions of masculinity in ways that are largely non-hypermasculine, many of them acknowledged that they had experienced a shift in their attitudes towards masculinity and inmate code behaviors. A theme behind this change in thinking was related to their incarceration experience. Adam explained that the amount of time on his current sentence was influential to him, while Sean acknowledged that experiencing loss during his

incarceration challenged his notions of masculinity, and Jeremy reflected on his earlier behavior during his incarceration.

**ADAM:** It's not until you mature and seek different and better things that you realize, "Man, I wasted a lot of time on that mess," you know? It's not, it's, so it's only been recent with this situation. And I think, too, the amount of time I'm given, you know, it really woke me up, man. Like I have .... get it right, you know... back then it wasn't even a thought.

**SEAN:** You know, you grow up with the old attitude of, well, "Real men don't cry. Big boys don't cry," ...that's how I was raised by an old farmer... it's so untrue. So untrue because if we weren't supposed to cry then why do we have tear ducts for, you know? And, and that's damaging to a child, 'cause I'll tell ya, ...I've gone through some things in here where, you know, I wanted to cry...I lost my mother ... and we were like best friends. And, I mean, I shed a few tears but I ...wanted to like cry-cry, but it's like this mental thing and I, I don't believe it's wrong. I never raised my children that way. But it's like this really weird subconscious like block that I have.

**JEREMY:** It's funny 'cause now I've taken a step back from that picture and I can see the big picture for what it is. And, and I, and I can say like, "Wow, I used to sound like that," you know? And it's embarrassing. I'm, I'm ashamed to say that I used to be like that, you know, but at some point, I guess I had an epiphany.

**Navigating the Inmate Code and Hypermasculinity.** A poignant theme among the participants was how they currently navigate or adapt to the inmate code in ways that allow them to not have to engage in hypermasculine behaviors, particularly violence. These

adaptations range from choosing to be verbally communicative over being violent, to separating themselves from other incarcerated individuals, to acknowledging the urge to want to engage in violence and self-reflecting in those moments.

**SEAN:** Some of these youngsters are watching, and in their mind they're like, "Man, I'd have whooped that dude." But I say, "Hey, you know what? I talked my way out of it and actually end up changin' it completely around on the person 'cause I used my mind not my might."

**MARTIN:** [I've] got a lot to lose in essence of my visitors.... So me goin' and doin' somethin' that jeopardizes my visits, that's what most important to me. But, also, there's the prison rules and you can't say, "Oh, I'm not doin' anything," or, so you have to make sure you talk to 'em in a certain way, say, "Hey, this is what I got goin' on. This is what I have to lose. I'm workin' on my appeals. I can't get involved in that."

**JEREMY:** I tend to not uh, uh, associate with many people, you know? Uh, I don't let people in my, my circle, you know? I'm very guarded and, you know, whereas before, I would go to war...so I've had to learn in here that there are those manipulation tactics and people don't necessarily care about me, more so as they care about themselves and, and they will throw me to the wolves, you know, to protect themselves. So to avoid that, I just stay by myself.

**LAWRENCE:** I'll be playin' out a scenario in my mind where like I'm just ready to pull a dude to the side and be, "Okay, do you know me from somewhere?" And if he's like, "No," "Well, why you keep lookin' at me like you got some kind of, you got somethin' on your mind?" It was a temptation to do that. And, and I have



to be like, and I always have to remind myself, “That’s not you. That’s that idiot that you was tryin’ to be when you was a teenager.” And he’s still there. He still tries to come back.

**The Inmate Code and Engagement in Programming.** While all of the incarcerated men identified the presence of the inmate code and related hypermasculine behaviors during incarceration, there were mixed attitudes on the influence of the inmate code and participating in programming during incarceration. Some claimed that the inmate code does not overtly punish incarcerated individuals for trying to better themselves.

**ADAM:** Handle your business, man. You know, that’s, that’s a big deal, you know what I mean? The convict code would never hinder a man from doin’ somethin’ that’s beneficial to himself, his community, his family.

**MARTIN:** If there’s, you know, somebody like me constantly up in here volunteerin’ to do work or goin’ to help out on programs, it could be viewed negatively. But in my time, you know, almost seven years, no one’s come at me and said, “Hey, you’re tryin’, you’re doin’ too much. You’re makin’ us look bad.” I, I haven’t seen that.

Others felt that programming is openly perceived as weak by the greater prison population.

**LAWRENCE:** See, one of the things about masculinity, too, in here, is there’s this thing that programming is not cool... Like people that program are a bunch of squares, they’re soft, they’re probably snitches because they’re frickin’ wantin’ to be around the cops or somethin’, they’re wantin’ to do the right things so they’re probably snitches. It’s just a stigma that it gets. So people that program, they’re kind of looked at as I wouldn’t trust that guy, that’s how the population sees us. So

when they get in these classes, there's this tendency for them to want to goof around because everybody's in there, and there's all this peer pressure, and not be as forthcoming, and be mad about the class.

Interestingly, Sean notes that expectations surrounding how men are supposed to deal with emotions may hinder the ability to deal with past traumas during programming.

**SEAN:** I'm gonna sit there and admit that there's some underlining issues I need to deal with in my life uh, if a person...is a drug addict, or a person's an alcoholic uh, and that person maybe was abused as a child, okay, whether sexually, emotionally, or physically. For them to deal with those emotions, it's, it's traumatizing... 'cause you have to go back to that point and deal with it. But if you've been told all along you don't deal with emotions, you know, you don't have feelings, feelings are for girls and things like that, you got to break that barrier, you got to, 'cause you have to go back there and say, "Hey, this is, this wasn't my fault, the person that hurt me was a bad person. It didn't have to define me though and, and this is what it did to me." And then I can start moving forward and building upon that.

**The Inmate Code and the Prison Yard Environment.** Despite the mixed feelings towards the inmate code's influence of engagement in programming, a salient theme throughout the interviews was the impact of the prison yard environment on the presence of the inmate code (referred to as "politics") and on the incarcerated men's ability to self-reflect. This suggests that while the inmate code may not directly impact willingness to participate or engage in programming during incarceration, it may have a direct impact on the prison yard environment which subsequently influences the ability to relax and self-reflect.

**ADAM:** This is a yard that complements and it goes, it goes with what I'm seekin' in life. It's not real political. It's not a bad environment. Not a lot of hostility. I don't feel threatened or, you know, my back against the wall in any way here, and I'm blessed for that.

**MARTIN:** I started out in a little bit higher yard, a four yard, and that's a lot different than this. This is considered like a camp, and it really is a camp to any other prison. You, you wouldn't even really call it a prison except that you've been, you know, taken away from the community. It's uh, it's very easy goin', it's non-political.

**JEREMY:** Comin' here...Bein' able to have solitude and peace of mind (laughter) for the first time in 13 years... some guys who knew me from the other yard, they're like, "We didn't think you'd make it six weeks here," that's how on edge I was...I fear that if I go back to these other yards where it's chaotic, that I might lose it again and I don't know if I'd be able to come back...Just bein' able to be by yourself... havin' solitude...time to reflect.

**LAWRENCE:** I can get up any time I want and just go outside, and the yard is so big here, and I'm like, this is the first time in years that I was able to be alone, where I could find a spot on the yard and sit down by myself and not have anybody by me in my face, talkin' to me, or askin' me somethin'. I'm like, "Dude, I could actually be alone here. Reflect." Whereas on [a level 4 yard], sometimes, I would take like an hour-long shower sometimes just to be alone.

Specifically, it was noted that there is a uniqueness to East Unit and its lack of tolerance for the inmate code and violence. The participants noted that while the inmate code still

existed on the yard to some extent, it is heavily monitored and there is zero tolerance for violence. Additionally, it was suggested that because of the unique structure of the yard many incarcerated individuals wanted to be there and would not engage in violence as to not risk being transferred to another yard. Lastly, it was mentioned that the way the yard is run does not allow for incarcerated individuals who are strongly engaged in the inmate code to last.

**MARTIN:** In this yard, I mean, there's still politics. I mean, there's [a] certain code that you can't do but it's not really heavy... They know what's goin' on everywhere because on here you have a lot of informants and tellin' stuff you wouldn't have on other yards... So they can control a lot of the politics here.

**ADAM:** See on other places, that's a cure, you know what I mean? Violence will cure a problem. Here, violence just gonna change your address.

**JEREMY:** Lower custody yards don't have quite the violence or expectation of violence as the higher custody yards. East Unit is unique because of the open nature or the open aspect of this place, man, people want to be here so... there tends to be less violence because people don't want to screw up their chance of livin' here.

**LAWRENCE:** These people end up buryin' themselves and diggin' their own graves. I know the way this yard is. This yard is constructed to where those people can't last. They never do.

Results from the first set of research questions show that the inmate code does exist strongly within the prison setting and, consistent with previous research, is reflective of hypermasculine attitudes and behaviors—specifically, the use of violence as a conflict resolution strategy. While the participants varied in their experiences with the inmate code,

with some more engaged in violence than others, they all acknowledged that many of the behaviors and attitudes surrounding the inmate code are usually brought in from outside of prison, but intensified in the prison setting, consistent with the importation and deprivation models of the conditions of confinement.

The participants shared similar ideas of masculinity that were largely non-hypermasculine, but reflective of hegemonic masculinity norms, yet they felt that their beliefs were not representative of the larger prison population. Their perceptions of other incarcerated individuals' definitions of masculinity were hypermasculine in nature, as they believed other incarcerated individuals defined masculinity through violence, displays of toughness, and the objectification and disrespect of women. The majority of participants expressed that they had experienced a shift in their masculinity attitudes during their current incarceration and also explained the ways in which they adapted their behavior to navigate the inmate code in such a way that they did not have to engage in hypermasculine behaviors.

While there was a shared belief that the inmate code and hypermasculine attitudes were strongly present in the prison setting, there were mixed attitudes regarding the impact of the inmate code and hypermasculinity on willingness to engage in programming during incarceration. Some of the men felt that the inmate code would never overtly punish or discourage engagement in programming, while another participant felt that programming was openly perceived negatively and that those perceptions influence the class environment once programming has begun. In that same vein, another participant felt that the expectations of the inmate and masculinity to not show emotions or express feelings

directly impacts incarcerated individuals' ability to deal with their current challenges and past traumas during programming.

Even though there were varied attitudes towards the influence of the inmate code and hypermasculinity on engagement in programming, there was a consensus that there was a relationship between the inmate code and the prison yard environment. Specifically, the inmate code was described as significantly less impactful on lower-level custody yards, and especially low at East Unit. Subsequently, participants felt that the lack of "prison politics" and violence at East Unit allowed them to relax and self-reflect in ways that they were not able to on other custody yards, suggesting that while there may not be a direct impact on the incarcerated individual from the inmate code to engage or not engage in programming, yard environments may vary in how conducive they are to the other prosocial behaviors based off of the presence of "prison politics" or the inmate code.

## **ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGAGEMENT IN PROGRAMMING**

The second goal of the study was to establish what incarcerated individuals believe influences engagement in programming during incarceration. The interviews revealed three major themes in assessing program engagement attitudes: motives for programming, barriers to programming, and effective programming characteristics. Each of the three themes are described in more detail below.

**Motives for Programming.** Motives for participating in programs during incarceration were noted by all of the participants. Specifically, the participants distinguished between programs that are voluntary and programs that are mandatory, noting that many of the participants in the voluntary programs are just seeking certificates and to regain lost privileges, while the participants in the mandatory programs typically do

not want to be there. However, it was also noted that there are incarcerated individuals participating in programs who truly want to be there. In addition, the incarcerated men noted that these motives usually influence the impact of the programs and the class environment.

**ADAM:** Well everybody has their own reason for programmin'. I would say it's about 50/50, and that's bein' optimistic, that's bein' hopeful about it. A lot of times people, for example, will get in trouble and they'll say, "Well program or do better and we'll see if we can't get your visits back or your phone calls back," and people will do it just for reasons, and then you have other guys who really want to uh, find a cure, a solution to their problem, want to do better, you know what I mean, and those are the guys who make programmin' fun, and beneficial, and helpful, and therapeutic, you know, it's those guys who really apply themselves, you know what I mean? And you have some guys who's just takin' up space, you know? But that's with everything in life. I mean, it's not just here in prison.

**LAWRENCE:** Unfortunately, why a lot of people program is because they want the certificates, and they do the whole thing just to get certificates, and have somethin' to show to the parole board...unfortunately, the voluntary programming, that's probably why about 80 percent of the people do it. There's probably only about 20 percent who really are like tryin' to better themselves.

**SEAN:** There's three different mandatory programs that have to take place and if you show up in the ranking list, they put you in this class. Uh, most of them classes are really like dry. Uh, the guys don't want to be there. They're forced to go there so anytime you force somebody to do something, you, you may be out of 20 guys,

one of the guys will get something out of it. The other guys are always tryin' to find ways around it.

In spite of the motivations to participate in programming, Adam suggests that what is most important is that incarcerated individuals simply sign up for programs and show up.

**ADAM:** The most important thing is that they signed up and that they're there, you see what I mean? My only problem with these fools is if they missin', like you can't get nothin' if you don't come, you see what I'm sayin'? But if you're there, and even if you don't engage man, we can work with you, we can give you our best and hope maybe you can take somethin' away with it, you know, from it.

**Barriers to Programming.** Adam acknowledges that there are barriers he believes prevent incarcerated individuals from wanting to participate in programs in the first place. First, he reasons that there may be personal reasons related to embarrassment, peer pressure, and educational attainment that might discourage participation in programming.

**ADAM:** A lot of things prevents people. Sometimes it's peer pressure or how it'll look, you know, to others. Sometimes it's just people don't feel like, because of the title, they have a need for a specific program... Sometimes guys can't read and write, you know what I mean, and they're embarrassed...This don't speak for everybody but a lot of guys in prison come from real troubled pasts and...education is somethin' that never played a part in life, you know what I mean? So it's like why now, you know?

Additionally, Adam acknowledges that a lack of autonomy during incarceration may prevent incarcerated individuals from programming because they do not want to be controlled in more ways than they already are.



**ADAM:** In prison we're told everything. We're told when we could go outside. We're told what time to eat lunch, breakfast, dinner... We're told what time we can see the counselors, what time we could have church. Everything is, is dictated to us... so a lot of guys in here feel like, "Well hell, I'm not gonna sign up for that. I don't need them tellin' me somethin' else I have to do." But in their mind and in their brain, that's really cool.

**Effective Programming Characteristics.** Despite the motives for participating in programming, many of the men noted positive experience they had with programming and what they believe makes programming effective. Programs that inspired growth and provoked deep discussions were noted to be the most valuable, and that programs are the most valuable for those who have already made a decision to change or grow.

**ADAM:** Hearin' different point of views that made sense to me to, to leave the class and take somethin' with me...I learned how to be open minded...come to terms with things that I should have known all along but I didn't...it taught me how to be a better speaker and how to uh, you know, be more intellectual...I'm uh, engagin' with people who, I won't say I looked up to but who I could tell was at a peace and who was happy...And I wanted that, I needed that...like, like much, much of the other things in my life, it became addictive where I was just signin' up to go and get the high of learnin'.

**LAWRENCE:** And those are the things I noticed where people grow the most, is when you have somethin' that provokes a discussion and gets that type of thing goin', and even, even debates, sometimes, and you have the teacher who has the right answers there to kind of help supervise all of that, and introduce the course

material into it, and continue to allow people to express themselves and listen to other people express themselves, that's when the growth takes place 'cause you're diggin' deep into your own beliefs and puttin' 'em out, and hearing other people do the same. And sometimes you can end up having what you believe be exposed as actually bein' a lie or bein' tweaked to bein' a more right direction.

**JEREMY:** If a person has already made the decision to grow, then yeah, that class is, is uh, valuable for 'em, but not for people who don't care about growth.

Martin and Jeremy specifically note their participation in a class called Impact of Crime on Victims Class (ICVC), and how they believed the reality and practicality of that class allowed for more impact and growth than some of the other programs they had participated in previously.

**MARTIN:** You can say and hear it but sometimes it just doesn't sink in. I mean, you have victims and they're passin' these pictures around, or tellin' their story, and they're cryin' and they're feelin', you can actually feel their hurt and see it. That's a whole, a whole different ballgame. Uh, you can sit and take classes and, you know, get these certificates but if you're not graspin' and understandin' it, or usin' it and applyin' it, in real world situations, you might not, might not learn from it...In ICVC, it's stuff that's actually happened and people hurt and real stuff to where it's like how could you not feel and hurt... I'll never forget that class.

**JEREMY:** The class brings you face to face with uh, uh, uh, things that people might have done on the streets, you know? Even though, even though it might not be their victims, you know, the story can trigger uh, memories from what they've either gone through or inflicted upon other people. And I think that's necessary,

you know, for a lot of these guys...sometimes guys need somethin' that's, that has to be shocking to wake them up.

Results from the second aim of the study illustrate the ways in which motives for programming influence the perceived effectiveness of programming. It was suggested that very few participants in programs are trying to better themselves—even within the voluntary programs. According to the participants, voluntary programs are utilized to regain lost privileges such as visits or phone calls, or to gain certificates of completion to show that an effort to change is being made. However, the participants did not feel that these motives were pure. Additionally, it was noted that within the mandatory programs very few incarcerated individuals want to be there, which causes the program to be boring or dry.

One of the participants suggested that there are barriers that prevent incarcerated individuals from signing up for programs or participating in the first place. Specifically, he indicated that education never played a large role in some incarcerated individuals' lives before prison, so it is hard to expect them to care about programming in prison. Second, he suggests that choosing not to program is a way to establish some autonomy in an environment that constantly dictates behavior. Whereas those who are incarcerated do not have any control over routine things such as when they eat or when they are allowed to be outside, they do have control over whether or not they program. So, refusing to program may be seen as an opportunity to establish a sense of control over one's life in an environment in which they feel powerless.

Despite feeling that many incarcerated individuals do not value or engage in programming, the participants noted several positive experiences with programming and

characteristics that they associate with effective programs. Specifically, programs that challenged previous notions of thinking, provoked deep discussion, and confronted incarcerated individuals with the consequences of their crimes and past behaviors were thought to be the most influential. This was especially apparent when the participants spoke of the Impact of Crimes on Victims class. It was acknowledged that hearing the experiences of victims rose above other programs because they were directly confronted with the emotions of the victims and forced to reflect on their own experiences with victimization, both as victims and offenders. All of which suggest that while there may be only a few who actively engage in programs for various reasons, when programs meet certain characteristics, they can be impactful and meaningful to all participants.

## **ATTITUDES TOWARDS REHABILITATION**

The third and final aim of the study was to identify what rehabilitation means to those who are incarcerated and assess what influences engagement in the rehabilitative processes during incarceration. In pursuit of this aim five key themes were identified: rehabilitation as a cognitive transformation, rehabilitation as hitting rock bottom, rehabilitation as therapy, barriers to rehabilitation, and previous thoughts on rehabilitation. Each of the five themes are explained below.

**Rehabilitation as a Cognitive Transformation.** Many identified rehabilitation as a cognitive transformation in which one self-reflects, takes responsibility for past actions, addresses the root of their problems, and changes their ways of thinking.

**ADAM:** And to me, rehabilitation has to uh, serve as some kind of relief to your past, you know what I mean? It has to help you escape yesterday... it's a way of

thinkin' and answerin' questions, and give you a different approach to certain things where you can really get some things off your chest, you know, and heal.

**SEAN:** Well, the first thing you HAVE to do, anybody that you rehabilitate 'em, is to dig down into the root of the problem. Okay? What stemmed, why did this person come to prison? You know, it's not, there's always an underlying issue. It's not the crime itself, there's an underlying issue of why that person committed a crime.

**JEREMY:** They need to understand where it all went wrong in their life, you know? Uh, some, some of these guys were abused, some of 'em were sexually abused, you know? Uh, neglected, you know, the physical, emotional, mental traumas that, that we've been through, you know, they, one of the things that ICVC showed me, that I didn't expect, was that everybody in here, we're victims before they started to victimize, you know? And I'm not talkin' about uh, uh, I'm talkin' about uh, you know, tremendously. These guys were screwed the hell up way before they came to prison. Prison is a result of their traumas.

**LAWRENCE:** That's what real rehabilitation does, it teaches you how to change your thinking.

**Rehabilitation as Hitting "Rock Bottom."** Consistent with previous lines of thought, there was a consensus that one has to be ready to change, change cannot be forced upon anyone, and that one has to hit "rock bottom" in order to change.

**ADAM:** I embrace the struggle because I feel as if I can do it here then when I go free and I run into a rough patch, I won't be desperate to make some dumb decisions to alleviate the struggle. I'll know that it's okay and that I can push past it with time

and effort... I hit rock bottom. I don't know what other way to put it. You know, this one took everything. I feel like I lost everything.

**LAWRENCE:** I just started really lookin' over my life, like all this stuff, like this is who my mother raised me to be, I'm like, "Everything you are is fake," I'm like, "You're tryin' to be like this big homie who showed you this lifestyle when you was 12/13 years old... and that moment in that cell, remember, it's about three in the morning up there, [I'm] cryin' my eyes out. I'm just like, like that's not me, like it never was me. But, and then what had me feelin' filthy is I'm like I finally became this person that I was tryin' so hard to be...I started tryin' to be this other person, and I became that, and when I became that, I looked in the mirror and I hated it, I'm like, "Dude, you're a freakin' monster. Like I hate you." And it, from that day forward, there's been growing pains to where I still have to learn things.

**SEAN:** You have to, as a person, get to the point where, "Hey, I want change in my life." Because like I said, you could sign up for every volunteer program there is. You could get put in every mandatory program there is. If you're motive isn't pure, if it isn't about, "I want to change, it's, I'm sick and tired of bein' the man that I, or male that I was"...Until a person totally gets to that point, you know what I mean, you can call it cliché if you want, but until a person gets to, pretty much hits rock bottom, they're not gonna change...I don't care, you can give 'em shock therapy, they're not gonna change.

**Rehabilitation as Therapy.** A major theme among rehabilitation attitudes was that rehabilitation had to be therapeutic in nature and that there is a strong need for therapy and

mentorship during incarceration. Specifically, the participants noted the need for one-on-one relationships in which deep-rooted issues are addressed.

**ADAM:** I've taken classes where I spoke about my past and after the class was over for that day, I felt like it was therapeutic. I felt like I got somethin' off my chest, you know, and I was able to, 'cause sometimes I spend a lot of time in my brain and that's when I stress and I worry, but if I'm able to talk about it or speak about it and get some input or some advice, then it helps me feel better.

**SEAN:** If there's more of that where a person could sit down one-to-one with somebody and just believe that that person truly cares and then it's not about your evaluating me or tryin' to put me on meds to sed, sedate my problem, but let me talk about them and then you can give me some viable uh, ways to deal with it. You know, whether maybe it's just listening, you know? We don't have that. I mean, I have it in here 'cause I have good friends that I can talk to, but a lot of people don't trust nobody in here.

**MARTIN:** But you have to have, you know, a true, probably a true counselor come in and sit down with him and say, "Okay, what is it that you really want to do? What are you passionate about? What can I get, gain access to?"

**JEREMY:** And I think that most normal people in society, when they realize they have deep-rooted issues, they go to therapy, you know? And you would think that it would be as easy as sayin', "Look, man, these guys in prison have issues, let's give 'em some therapy and then send 'em to the world." Let's, let's take the time that we've given them, the three, or five, or ten years and offer some real solutions by changin' this person's mind.

**LAWRENCE:** People need psychology in here, they need uh, they need therapy. They need to have classes that are therapeutic and not just a bunch of book smarts being thrown out, and about, “Oh, if you’re faced with this decision - if you do this decision, this is the consequence, and if you do this, this is the consequence.” Well if you’re dealin’ with somebody who’s not playin’ with a full deck, he’s not gonna give a damn about what the consequences are... he’s dealing with the consequences right now and if this wasn’t a big enough deterrent for him, all this stuff you’re laying out in here, it’s not gonna stop, we gotta get to why is this person doin’ this, what is this person’s problem?

**Barriers to Rehabilitation.** Additionally, the participants noted that even though they had experiences and beliefs surrounding rehabilitation, there are still relevant challenges to its achievement during incarceration.

**JEREMY:** Uh, so we’re second and third class citizens. You see that as a kid, and as a kid, when you see that, what is there to strive for? Why, why would I kill myself to be what I can’t be? So they give up as a kid. So now when you come to prison and you tell ‘em, “Oh, we’re gonna rehabilitate you. We’re gonna teach you all this stuff?” “Why?” I’m gonna go back into society, who, you know, I’m disenfranchised already now that I got a felony so, so I’m even more insignificant. I don’t even have a voice now. So what do I need to work for?

**ADAM:** The prison environment influences a lot because...a lot of prison environment is negative...a lot of people in here just don’t have the will to come out from under the shit they cause. They’re comfortable...They, they think rehabilitation or help is a handout...And until you know that the power’s in your



hands, what are you gonna do? You're gonna just sit around and wait for it...And here it's a lot of negativity where guys don't believe uh, it's even a way, it's worthwhile.

**MARTIN:** So as soon as they have the model of, you know, the constant punishment-punishment-punishment, "Oh, by the way, you're an inmate. You're an inmate. You're an inmate. Oh, did you forget you're an...", and that constant pokin' and proddin' instead of sayin', "Okay, punishment is you comin' to prison. Now what can we do to fix you and help you and better you?"

**Previous Thoughts on Rehabilitation.** Lastly, but perhaps most striking, was that most of the participants had not thought about rehabilitation before or what it meant to them. Of those who had, the thought process had only begun recently. Even though all of the participants were able to define what rehabilitation was to them and acknowledge the ways in which it is hindered during incarceration and the ways that they have experienced, most had not actively thought about rehabilitation before these interviews.

**ADAM:** No, it, and I did, I been in over four years, I didn't even think this way until the Inside Out Program, until the, that semester I did, where I was asked questions like uh, "What are prisons for?" And, "Why do people commit crimes?" Like these questions allow me to really think, you see what I'm sayin'? And, "What is rehabilitation?" And sittin' in a circle of other classmates and hearin' different perspectives and opinions, and I'm like, "Wow, really? What is rehabilitation?" So I've only learned this stuff over a year ago, a little over a year. But again, it was, I involved myself with the program, not knowing what to expect, just wanted to be

productive, and I come out with a different, a stronger thought pattern and process of how things really are, you know? I learned from that a lot.

**JEREMY:** I've never thought of that. You know, I've never given any of that any thought, what it means to me, I don't know, I mean, rehabilitation, to me, would be to rework your whole self, you know, not, not just, you know, "Oh, I'm gonna stop cussing," and then I'm rehabilitated, you know, you have to rework your thinking, you know? Uh..., to, and, and you can't just offer, "Oh, I'm gonna rework your thinking class."

**INTERVIEWER:** How did you form that definition or that opinion about rehabilitation?

**LAWRENCE:** I just formed it right now.

Jeremy goes as far to say that he believes rehabilitation is not considered by most incarcerated individuals at all.

**JEREMY:** I mean, people don't think about rehabilitation. They, you know, there's, there's a saying in the hood, if you knew better, you do better, you know? And they don't know better so they don't do better.

Results from the third research aim show that rehabilitation is considered to be a cognitive transformation in which one confronts underlying issues and changes the way that they think. This process is considered by participants to involve self-reflection and taking responsibility for past behavior. However, it was widely noted that in order to begin the rehabilitative process one has to hit "rock bottom" and reach a point where they truly want to change and better themselves. In addition, the participants felt that therapy was an integral part of the rehabilitative process and that one-on-one relationships in which

incarcerated individuals could be heard should be a part of rehabilitation during incarceration. Participants felt that there were certain barriers related to the prison environment that actively impede rehabilitation during incarceration. Specifically, it was suggested that there was more of an orientation towards punishment and reminding incarcerated individuals of the fact that they are incarcerated than actively trying to better incarcerated individuals. It was also mentioned that rehabilitation is perceived as a handout and that, coupled with the negativity of the prison environment, prevents engagement in rehabilitation. Lastly, even though each of the participants were able to define what rehabilitation meant to them and describe what they believe prevents its attainment, few had actually thought about it previously.

## **DISCUSSION**

A decade ago, Francis Cullen (2007) encouraged criminologists to reaffirm rehabilitation as the guiding paradigm for correctional policy and practice. He reasoned that the utilization of punishment-oriented philosophies did not work in promoting successful outcomes, that rehabilitation programs are effective, and that the public supports rehabilitation. Largely left out of that charge was the voice of people who are incarcerated themselves. This omission is important because these are the individuals who we expect to change, and while there is importance in scholars and the public accepting rehabilitation as the leading standard for corrections, if those who are incarcerated are not acknowledged we are missing an important piece of the puzzle. The purpose of the current work was to address this limitation by directly asking those who are incarcerated what barriers they see to programming and rehabilitation during incarceration, with an emphasis on the influence

of the inmate code and hypermasculinity. Based on the results of this study, three conclusions can be reached.

First, the inmate code and hypermasculinity seem to have a strong presence and influence on behavior in the prison environment. Participants described the variety of ways in which they perceived the presence of the inmate code, experienced the inmate code, adapted to the inmate code, and compared the inmate code to their lives outside of prison, illustrating that in one way or another incarcerated individuals are most likely confronted with the inmate code in some form during incarceration. However, this study finds that there are mixed feelings as to whether or not engagement in programming and the rehabilitative process are influenced by the inmate code. While some of the participants felt strongly that the inmate code does not influence the decision to participate and engage in programming, others felt that programming is perceived negatively to the larger prison population. It was also acknowledged that masculinity expectations may influence behavior *after* participation in programming has already begun and that the violence associated with the inmate code, hypermasculinity, and incarceration experience need to be addressed before reentry. This suggests that the inmate code might influence or prevent the initial decision to participate in programming, but even after participation has begun masculinity expectations and hypermasculine attitudes might prevent incarcerated individuals from benefiting from the programs.

The discrepancies in these views may be best explained by the observations about the origination of the inmate code. Participants felt that the inmate code was generally the result of imported beliefs and behaviors that become intensified within the prison setting. However, participants varied in their experiences with the attitudes and behaviors

associated with the inmate code prior to incarceration, and this seemed to be related to perceptions of whether or not the inmate code influences engagement in programming. For example, Sean noted that the inmate code was entirely new to him, having no previous experience with those expectations of behavior before incarceration. In addition, Sean felt that the inmate code did not dictate or influence participation in programming. On the other hand, Lawrence described experiences on the street that resembled the inmate code and were largely hypermasculine, and subsequently felt that masculinity expectations and the inmate code look down upon participation in programming. These observations are reflective of a long line of thought about the inmate code and where it originates, with some asserting that the inmate code is a result of importation (Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Mears et al., 2015), while others argue that the inmate code is a consequence of deprivation (Sykes, 1958). Supporters of the importation model assert that violence in prison can be seen partially as the result of imported belief systems that encourage violence as a coping mechanism and a conflict resolution strategy, whereas supporters of the deprivation model argue that violence in prison is the result of the stigmatizing and alienating nature of prison. Sean's experiences are very much reflective of the deprivation model, while Lawrence's experiences exemplify the importation model. In this sense, the inmate code may be more of a barrier to programming and the rehabilitative process to those who are "importing" hypermasculine beliefs and having those beliefs intensified throughout incarceration versus those who are experiencing the inmate code and the associated hypermasculine attitudes for the first time. All of which suggests that there is value in correctional institutions understanding and assessing what attitudes and beliefs incarcerated individuals

bring into prison with them, as these beliefs shape behavior during incarceration and may influence willingness to engage in programming and the rehabilitation process.

While it is unclear from this study to what extent the inmate code directly influences engagement in programming during incarceration, it was strongly agreed upon that the inmate code *indirectly* influences the prison yard environment, which subsequently influences the ability for some incarcerated individuals to self-reflect and relax during incarceration. Participants described heightened expectations of violence and engagement in the inmate code on higher custody yards, while simultaneously acknowledging East Unit's unique intolerance for violence and ability to control the inmate code through informants. There was a consensus that East Unit was a good unit to be housed within, and a unit other incarcerated individuals wanted to be housed within, because of the lack of "prison politics," lack of violence, and open nature of the yard, which some participants felt was conducive to self-reflection and relaxation. This finding highlights something important about the inmate code and incarceration: while participants did not agree on its direct influence on programming, they agreed that many incarcerated individuals do not like living in environments highly influenced by the inmate code and hypermasculinity, and when the inmate code is addressed and controlled it makes their incarceration experience noticeably better. While it should be noted that being able to relax and self-reflect are not the same as engaging in programming or the rehabilitative process, they are still positive behaviors that could eventually lead to engagement in those things. So whether or not the inmate code serves as an overt barrier to programming and rehabilitation during incarceration, there does not seem to be a downside in addressing it and trying to

minimize its presence within the prison environment, and it appears to be something that would be welcomed by incarcerated individuals.

Second, from the perspective of incarcerated individuals, engagement in programming during incarceration is most heavily influenced by the motivations to program, the barriers that prevent participation in programming, and the characteristics of the programs offered during incarceration. Overall, participants felt that the majority of incarcerated individuals in programming did not value programming or engage in it meaningfully, regardless of whether the programs were voluntary or mandatory. Although, they did point out that the reasons for lack of engagement in voluntary and mandatory programming differed in meaningful ways. Lack of engagement in voluntary programming was perceived to be the result of incarcerated individuals participating to regain privileges that had been taken away such as visitation or phone calls, or to achieve certificates to convince others of an effort to change. Lack of engagement in mandatory programming was seen as the consequence of forcing incarcerated individuals to do something that they did not want to do. All of which suggests that whether or not programs are voluntary or mandatory, there are most likely always going to be incarcerated individuals who do not want to be there. Yet, Adam's contention that the reason incarcerated individuals are in programming matters less than them actually being present gives reason for hope. It suggests that while it is certainly more fruitful to have incarcerated individuals in programs who want to be there and engage, it is not necessarily impossible to engage those who do not want to be there—it only becomes impossible when they are not in a program at all. This approach may only affect a few out of the many, but they are the few who may not be reached otherwise, which suggests that there is value in programming irrespective of the

motivations to be there. However, these motivations should not be ignored. Participants were quick to acknowledge that the tone of a program is impacted by incarcerated individuals' motives to be there. Those who are participating because they want to change were described to make the programs fun and influential, while those who are participating for reasons unrelated to personal growth and clearly did not want to be there were thought to make the programs dry and boring. Even though the potential lies for programs to positively impact those who do not want to be there, the possibility remains that the presence of those who do not want to be there detracts from the quality of the programs for those who do, creating an interesting debate for how programming in prison should be structured based off of motivations to participate, and one that future research should address.

In addition, it was suggested that there are a number of things that prevent incarcerated individuals from wanting to participate in programming in the first place. Of particular interest was the observation that choosing not to program might be the result of having limited autonomy over one's life during incarceration, making the decision to not participate in programming less about the choice to program and more about asserting power and control in an environment that gives few opportunities to do so. The choice to not program as a way to assert power and control is reflective of previous masculinity research that claims incarceration deprives men of the opportunity to achieve hegemonic masculine identities in socially acceptable ways, causing them to pursue those goals in a maladaptive or hypermasculine manner, typically through violence (Karp, 2010; Michalski, 2015). Although the choice not to program is not to the extreme of violence, it represents a way in which incarcerated men seek to establish their male identities by



pursuing valued aspects of the hegemonic masculine ideal – power and control – with the resources that are available. This pursuit in an environment like prison, in which those resources are severely limited, sometimes comes at the cost of incarcerated individuals' own well-being. In this sense, the pursuit of hegemonic masculinity can serve as a barrier to participation in programming. Although a single observation is far from conclusive, it does suggest that the masculinity resources matter in prison and that there is a strong need to teach incarcerated men how to achieve their desired masculine identities in ways that are adaptive, prosocial, and healthy.

Although many challenges to effective programming were identified, it was widely acknowledged that programming can be effective when certain characteristics are met. Specifically, programs are thought to be the most impactful when they encourage deep and meaningful discussion, challenge previous notions of thinking, and show incarcerated individuals the consequences of their crimes. This was most apparent through the Impact of Crimes on Victims Class (ICVC) in which victims of crimes came to speak with incarcerated individuals and share their stories. Participants explained that this class was especially influential because it forced them to see the consequences of their past behavior, to empathize with those who came in to share their stories, and to even confront their past experiences with victimization. The practicality and applicability of the class was highly valued by the participants, who felt that there is a particular importance in being able to use and apply the lessons brought forth in programs and having to listen to victims of crime was an effective way to do just that. While there may be only a few who actively engage in programs for various reasons, when programs meet certain characteristics, they can be impactful and meaningful to participants. Through the descriptions of what characteristics

define the best programs—meaningful discussion, responsibility and accountability for past actions, alternative ways of thinking—it seems as though incarcerated individuals want to be engaged and challenged by programs in ways that have direct applications to their lives.

Third, rehabilitation was defined by participants as a cognitive transformation in which one self-reflects, takes responsibility for past actions, addresses the root of their problems, makes peace with their past, and eventually changes their ways of thinking. Consistent with previous notions of rehabilitation, the sentiments that change cannot be forced and incarcerated individuals have to want to change were echoed frequently and the desire to change was considered to be the result of hitting “rock bottom” (Giordano, Cernkovich, & Rudolph). Although participants did not explicitly define what “rock bottom” meant to them, their experiences surrounding it suggest that it is reaching a point where one feels as if they have lost everything and strongly dislike who they are, to the point where there is no other choice but to change. In this sense, hitting rock bottom seems connected to the process of intense and meaningful self-reflection, suggesting that programs offered during incarceration could benefit from encouraging and pushing incarcerated individuals to self-reflect as a means to initiate the rehabilitative process.

There was a clear sense of agreement that one of the most effective ways to address past behavior, confront root-problems, and self-reflect would be through therapy or therapeutic interventions. All of the participants identified a need for therapy during incarceration, specifically citing the need for one-on-one relationships grounded in trust that try to understand how incarcerated individuals have gotten to this point in their lives, and work with them to make positive changes. This finding is promising in that it shows

there is a desire to change among incarcerated individuals and that they want to embrace therapeutic interventions, which past research has shown can be incredibly difficult to do during incarceration (Kupers, 2001; 2005). All of which strongly suggests that the rehabilitation process during incarceration could greatly benefit from the inclusion of therapy and therapeutic interventions for incarcerated individuals.

Lastly, some incarcerated individuals may go their entire sentence without ever thinking about rehabilitation. Findings from this study indicated that some participants had not thought about rehabilitation or what it meant to them until the interviews, and for the one participant who had thought about rehabilitation previously, that process had only begun recently. Even though all of the participants were able to define what rehabilitation meant to them, describe rehabilitative experiences, and acknowledge the barriers that may exist to its achievement, few had thought about rehabilitation actively and yet their time spent incarcerated ranged from 4 to 22 years. This is particularly striking as this sample of incarcerated individuals are considered model incarcerated individuals, all of which are engaging in programming and, arguably, the rehabilitative process. If these incarcerated individuals have rarely thought about rehabilitation, it seems unlikely that other incarcerated individuals are actively thinking about rehabilitation. Overall, this finding highlights something important about rehabilitation and programming during incarceration: just because incarcerated individuals are participating or engaging in programming during incarceration does not mean that they are thinking about rehabilitation, and programs are not necessarily inherently rehabilitative. We might be misguided in assuming that just because programs offered during incarceration meet the principles of effective intervention (Smith, Gendreau, & Swartz, 2009) means that they are

rehabilitative in nature. To expect incarcerated individuals to be rehabilitated without them ever thinking about rehabilitation seems incredibly flawed, suggesting that perhaps the first barrier to rehabilitation during incarceration is asking incarcerated individuals what rehabilitation means to them and what it would look like if they were rehabilitated. While correctional institutions cannot force incarcerated individuals to want to change or to be rehabilitated, they may be able to plant the seed.

While this study took an important first step in examining the “client’s perspective” of a correctional system grounded in rehabilitation, future research should seek to improve upon the areas in which this work fell short. For example, the sample used for this study was comprised of men who were largely middle-aged and had already spent at least 4 years incarcerated. Future work could benefit from gaining the perspective of younger incarcerated men who have spent less time incarcerated and evaluating how their attitudes, perceptions, and experiences develop or change across time. Using longitudinal methods to examine engagement in programming and rehabilitation as they relate to the inmate code and hypermasculinity would be considered ideal, as findings from this study suggest that engagement in and attitudes towards the inmate code, programming, and rehabilitation change over time. The unique structure and environment of East Unit makes it difficult to generalize findings from this study to other custody yards, even within the same correctional system. Future research would benefit from gaining the perspective of incarcerated individuals across a variety of custody-level yards, as this research finds that presence of the inmate code varies from yard to yard. Lastly, this study is limited by a small sample of incarcerated individuals who are already engaged in programming and with the rehabilitative process. So, while findings from this study may be representative of

incarcerated individuals who have already “bought in” to programming and rehabilitation during incarceration, it is difficult to argue that they are representative of all incarcerated individuals.

While there is limitation in using a small sample of model incarcerated individuals and relying solely on qualitative data, there is an equal amount of benefit that is largely underappreciated. Utilizing qualitative methods, particularly in-depth interviews, is a valuable way to find out what works for rehabilitation and programming during incarceration (Presser, 2009; Wright & Bouffard, 2014)—particularly using samples of inmates who are finding some degree of programming and rehabilitative success during incarceration (Maruna, 2015). All too often we focus our efforts on individuals who are resisting programming and rehabilitation or who are engaging in behavior we wish to change. While this sampling approach certainly has value, there is something to be learned from those who are finding and achieving success during incarceration—inmates who are displaying prosocial behavior, engaging in programming, and making cognitive transformations. If we wish to understand how to make programming work during incarceration in pursuit of achieving rehabilitative outcomes, it makes sense to talk to those who have found success and ask them *how*. Those who are already engaging in programming and displaying the behavior we wish to see in all of those who are incarcerated can provide insight into how the process works and reflect on what has influenced or impacted their rehabilitative process. We have just as much, if not more, to learn from our successes than our shortcomings, and unfortunately, this an underutilized approach in criminological research.

When all is said and done, the processes surrounding rehabilitation are complex, but if corrections is to embrace rehabilitation as its guiding principle it must also embrace the perspectives of those we are trying to rehabilitate. This study sought to take a first step towards this by exploring the barriers that currently exist to a successful rehabilitative ideal during incarceration by asking those who are incarcerated what they believe those barriers to be, if they exist at all. Findings suggest that incarcerated individuals have a lot to overcome before engaging meaningfully in programming and the rehabilitative process during incarceration, some of which is related to the inmate code and the hypermasculine environment in which it exists, but most of which is related to personal readiness to change. While this study is bound by its limitations, it is the hope of the author that the findings of this study illustrate the promise of a correctional system grounded in rehabilitation and mindful of the opinions and experiences of incarcerated individuals.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## Hypermasculinity and Incarceration: Exploring Barriers to Rehabilitation

**Participant ID:** \_\_\_\_\_

Hello, my name is Stephanie Morse. I am working on a research project run by Arizona State University. The purpose of the project is to learn more about what influences participation in rehabilitative programming during incarceration, with an emphasis on masculinity attitudes. I would like to ask you a series of questions that will take approximately 1-2 hours to answer. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate, skip interview questions, or withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. Arizona Department of Corrections personnel will not have access to the information you provide us. The information you provide us is confidential and it will not help or hurt you. Participation in the interview is your consent to be a part of this study. Do you have any questions?

*First, I would like to ask you some simple demographic questions.*

### Introduction

1. How old are you?
2. What is your race/ethnicity?
3. What is the highest level of education you have received?
4. Are you in a committed relationship?
5. Are you married?
6. Do you have any children?

*Now I would like to talk to you about some of your experiences with incarceration.*

### Incarceration

1. How long have you been in prison?
2. Can you tell me about what it has been like to be in prison?
3. Are there any ways that you behave or act differently in prison versus outside of prison?
4. If yes, what are the differences?
5. Are there any expectations from other inmates about how you should act in prison?
6. If yes, what are the expectations?
7. How do you feel about these expectations?
8. How do you think these expectations have influenced your behavior?

*Now I would like to ask you some questions about masculinity and what you think it means to be a man in today's world and in prison.*

### Hypermasculinity & Incarceration

1. Can you tell me about what you think it means to be a man or to be masculine?
2. How did you form these opinions?
3. Do you believe there are any societal expectations about how you should act based off of being a man?
4. What are the expectations?
5. What do you think of these expectations?

6. How, if at all, have these expectations influenced your behavior?
7. How, if at all, has incarceration influenced the way you think about what it means to be a man or to be masculine?
8. Do you believe there are expectations about how you should act in prison based off of being a man?
9. What are the expectations?
10. What do you think about these expectations?
11. How, if at all, do these expectations influence your behavior?
12. How do you think these expectations influence other inmates' behavior?

*Now I would like to talk to you about your experiences with programming in prison.*

#### Programming and Incarceration

1. Can you tell me about your experiences with programming in prison?
2. Have you participated in programming?
3. When did you start?
4. Are you participating in any programs now?
5. What programs?
6. How do you feel about programming in prison?
7. How do you think other inmates feel about programming in prison?
8. What has influenced your participation in programming in prison?
9. What do you think influences other inmates' participation in programming?
10. How do you think your experiences with programming compare to other inmates?

*Now I would like to ask you some questions about your experiences with rehabilitation in prison.*

#### Rehabilitation

1. Can you tell me what rehabilitation means to you?
2. Can you tell me about your experiences with rehabilitation in prison?
3. Have you found your experiences with programming to be rehabilitative?
4. What do you think makes a program rehabilitative?
5. How do you think other inmates feel about rehabilitation in prison?
6. How do you think your experiences with rehabilitation compare to other inmates' experiences?
7. How, if at all, have your attitudes towards rehabilitations changed since being incarcerated?
8. What, if anything, has influenced these changes?

*Now I would like to ask you some questions about masculinity as it relates to programming and rehabilitation in prison.*

#### Hypermasculinity, Programming and Rehabilitation

1. How, if at all, have others expectations about how one should act in prison influenced your willingness to participate in programming?
2. How, if at all, do you think these expectations influence other inmates' willingness to participate in programming?
3. How, if at all, have others' expectations about how you should act as a man in prison

influenced your participation in programming?

4. How, if at all, have your own expectations about how you should act as a man in prison

influenced your participation in programming?

5. How, if at all, do you think expectations about how one should act in prison influence rehabilitation in prison?
6. How, if at all, do you think expectations about how one should act as a man in prison influence rehabilitation in prison?
7. Do you believe current programming addresses masculinity as it relates to incarceration?
  - a. If yes, how do programs address masculinity?
    - i. Do you believe it is effective?
  - b. If no, do you think programs should address masculinity?
    - i. How do you think this should be done?

### Closing

Is there anything else that you believe is important to know about what we've talked about today?